

## Taking Jesus at His Word Sermon Discussion Leader's Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** To list different "authorities" in our life, and discuss why we are sceptical of Jesus' authority.

**Sermon Refresher:** Dave taught that Jesus is presented to us in and after the sermon on the mount as a person with incredible authority. The question for us is: what will we do with Jesus?

**Icebreaker:** Share a time you tested the limits, or did something potentially stupid or risky as a child.

**Transition:** Most of us have stories from our childhood about doing things that we would never do as adults. In some cases, our parents warned us, in others we got into trouble before they could. The funny thing about being a kid, is that when your parents warn you... you just want to do it more! Even as adults it can be difficult to listen to authority.

### **Discussion:**

1. Share some of the different things, people, or media-outlets that have the most authority in your life. Why do they have authority?
2. What makes it easy to trust an authority in your life? What makes it difficult to trust an authority in your life?
3. After Jesus finished his sermon on the mount, Matthew records how the crowds responded. Read Matthew 7:28-29 out loud:

### **Matthew 7:28-29**

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

# THE **crossing** **small groups**

Imagine you were in the crowd. Describe some of the reactions you can imagine people having to Jesus, given what you remember about the sermon.

(How do you think leaders reacted? The rich? The poor? "Sinners" like tax collectors or prostitutes? People who liked what Jesus said? Who disliked it?)

**Transition:** The question for us tonight is: how will we respond to Jesus?

4. What parts of Jesus' teaching do you have a difficult time trusting?

**Transition:** Earlier tonight we talked about how it's easy to follow an authority if we trust it. We do not like to follow authorities if we *do not* trust them.

5. What keeps us from trusting Jesus as our life's greatest authority?

**Digging Deeper:** In Dave's sermon, he described how the church is more global than most of us realize. By 2020 Christianity will have grown from 11.4 million (1.2% of the population), to 171.1 million (10.5%). In 1910 only 12 million people in Africa's population were Christian (9%), by 2020 there will be 630 million (49.3%). These numbers remind us that "American Christianity" is *the* form of Christianity or the *majority* form of Christianity. So, if we want to be Christians, it's not about becoming "American Christians."

How does this challenge our notion of Jesus' authority? In what ways have we replaced Jesus' authority with American Christianity?

6. Think about Jesus' entire life story. What reasons do we have to trust him?

**Sharing and Prayer:** Break into groups of 2-3 and share one way you want to trust Jesus' authority in your life. Pray for God's spirit to empower you.